



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560

Hearings set for Yakima and Olympia

Rule changes proposed to Livestock Identification Program

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Agriculture (WSDA) will hear comments on proposed changes to the Livestock Identification Program rules at hearings Dec. 9 and Dec. 10. The proposal aligns the program with a 2003 law that provides stable funding for the program, and clarifies when WSDA inspects livestock for brands or other proof of ownership as they are sold, moved out of state, or consigned to livestock markets, feedlots or slaughter facilities. Hearings will take place in:

- Yakima: 11 a.m., Dec. 9, Yakima Masonic Center, 504 N. Naches Ave.
- Olympia: 11 a.m., Dec. 10, Room 259, Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington St.

The proposal limits the use of “self-inspection,” which is performed strictly by the buyer and the seller, to establish ownership of livestock for private sales of 15 head or less. It also creates an inspection exemption for dairy calves less than 30 days old, provided the seller holds a grade A dairy license.

To cover the costs of the Livestock Identification Program, and provide service enhancements requested by industry, the law also increases program fees. The recording fee for livestock brands increased from \$35 for two years to \$120 for a four-year period. Brand inspection fees for cattle increased from 60 cents a head to 85 cents a head, and horse inspection fees increased from \$2.40 a head to \$3.50. The late renewal fee also rose from \$10 to \$25.

The fee increases will allow WSDA to:

- Restore department inspection of cattle at certified feedlots and slaughter plants that have been operating under self-inspection since 1998.
- Increase livestock theft investigation activities.
- Hire a program manager who is dedicated to livestock identification issues.

Finally, the law requires WSDA and the livestock industry to study future needs related to animal disease and food safety trace-back and identification requirements by the federal government. A report on the study is due to the Legislature by December 2005.

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Every year, program staff inspects about 650,000 cattle and 15,000 horses for the state's 11,000 ranchers, feeders and dairy farmers. The program maintains the official recordings of 7,500 livestock brands.

Written comments will be accepted until 5 p.m. Dec. 10. For a copy of the proposed rules, or to submit comments, contact Dannie McQueen, Washington State Department of Agriculture, by mail at P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Wash. 98504-2560, by e-mail to dmcqueen@agr.wa.gov or fax (360) 902-2092.

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